

## **Fiji Swim – August, 2007: Spot's race report!**

**There was an old Shakespearean time when girls ruled the ocean...**

- **18km team swim:**

I actually did my first team boat swim ever. Before the race I was speaking like an expert – surprise – surprise. It wasn't until we were on the boat for a few hours that I realised I usually swam these races SOLO & hadn't in fact done the team thing on the boat! I was in TEAM NZ which comprised of Danyon Loader (dual Olympic gold medallist), NZ Swimming executive Paul (a very handy swimmer), Pom come Kiwi come psycho-therapist Rachel & Pure Kiwi Kim.

It was a strange experience where we went through all the emotions. We were on & in the water for nearly 5 hours.

We initially started swimming for 5 minutes each, which basically meant you had 20 minutes to get back in the boat, dry, drink, eat & refresh! Let me tell you, there is pressure to swim the 5 minutes hard! After 2 hours, we realised that we were a shot at 3<sup>rd</sup>.

However, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> were looking like getting ahead, so we decided to ditch our 2 slower swimmers & do 3 minute rotations each between Danyon, Paul & I. This meant we now swam flat out for 3 mins & only now had 6 mins to get in the boat, dry, eat & drink. It was aptly named the ROTATIONS OF DEATH! We did this for 90 minutes, established our 3<sup>rd</sup> placing & begged the girls to do a few swims to give us a break!

One thing I have found over the years is how hard it is to get what you want from a girl after you have ditched her.... But, they came good! They actually had a new lease of life after the rest & added greatly to our team effort – thanks girls! We were now convinced that 3<sup>rd</sup> as 1<sup>st</sup> & used this as our theme to get to the end! We ended up winning a sprint finish for 1<sup>st</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup>) with the local Fijian team, which had all their top swimmers in it!

I was quickly brought back down to earth when Penny was prancing around with her ALL GIRL team with the GOLD MEDALS, whilst Lou & Juliette were equally as proud with their SILVER MEDALS!!! Girls 3 – Spot 0.

- **Spot the Groupie... Have I mentioned the word Olympic yet???**

My little trip to Fiji was definitely highlighted by meeting, racing & training with some of the best Olympic swimmers of all time.

My pick was being in the mix with dual Olympic gold medallists Natalie Coughlin (USA) & Danyon loader (NZ) in the 2.6km ocean swim.

The lowlight having to surface when going on a beginner scuba dive with Natalie because I was too hung over & feeling like I was going to spew in my mouth piece!

It was a great opportunity to hang out with these guys as well as Aussie Olympic legends Shane Gould & John Konrads!

Enough of the groupies stuff, on to the racing....

- **2.6km Swim race report:**

I am not sure how I do this, but being the eternal optimist....

I thought I could win! This is despite being 41, fat (by elite athlete standards), hung over, medium fitness level...etc.

It is strange what goes through my head & I clearly remember thinking that no-one was really warming up when our boat dropped us out for the sandbank start..

I, on the other hand, had done a 1km hangover swim before getting on the boat & was now doing some mini sprints to get the HR up!

To cut a long story short, I lived the dream! There I was swimming on Trudee's feet (World Cup winner), eye balling Natalie Coughlin (dual Olympic Champion) with Danyon Loader (dual Olympic Champion) on my feet! The further I went, the greater visions I had of striding up the beach claiming it. Mix this in with some of the most tropical fish in the world underneath us – I WAS IN HEAVEN!

Like all Shakespearean tragedies, the fall was not far away..... And fall we did!!!

After sitting tight for 1500 metres with my Olympic buddies, my world came tumbling down!!! It is amazing how quickly things can change from certain victory (in my head) to disaster! I struggled home, losing 73 seconds in the last km over the winner – Trudee.

I was the 3<sup>rd</sup> male overall, however, was 7<sup>th</sup> across the line – GO THE GIRLS!

- Beach to Boat to Bar – the real race!

Now, this was my chance to impress.

You had to run 200 metres in your flippers, swim 200 metres around a boat & run another 200 metres, before sculling a beer & putting the empty glass on your head!

Man – this was possibly the hardest thing I have ever done & then I had to scull my beer.

Being the competitor I am, I hadn't given up when exiting the water in 2<sup>nd</sup> place behind some 20 year old US Collegiate Champion swimmer. I used all my positive self talk to lift my now totally lactated legs across the sand to the bar. Whilst I don't wish anything bad on my competitors, I was certain he would fall, spew or possibly drop dead....

He didn't – I lost! Once every so often – I hate reality.

And the reality was that I lost & was about to be sick (see photo).

Once I had regained my composure, I realised how funny it all was...

And how much fun I had had on the whole trip!

It was a great mental break for me & thank you to everybody for being my friend!

Now I just have to pay off my VISA card drinking bill (\$974 in 6 days) – those days are now officially over!

If you are thinking of an off season swim/ trip, this is the perfect one -

<http://www.fijiswims.com/entrypage.html>

Thank you to Holly, Kate & Dave from for hosting such an amazing event!